

Bland Days Commercial Thinning

South Umpqua Connectivity Density Management Environmental Assessment (EA # OR-105-00-03)

and

South River Commercial Thinning 2000 Environmental Assessment (EA # OR-105-00-08)

South River Field Office, Roseburg District

Prepared: August 8, 2002

Decision Documentation

Decision: It is my decision to offer the Bland Days Commercial Thinning timber sale, partially implementing Alternative 1 of the South Umpqua Connectivity Density Management analysis and Alternative 2 of the South River Commercial Thinning 2000 analysis as described on pp. 3-5 of each respective EA.

The sale will be composed of three units totaling 80 acres. The units will be comprised of Unit A from the South Umpqua Connectivity Density Management analysis, and Units L and M from the South River Commercial Thinning 2000 analysis. Unit A is a 56-acre parcel located in Section 17 of T. 30 S., R. 3 W. Approximately 55 acres are allocated as Connectivity/Diversity Block and 1 acre allocated as Riparian Reserve. Units L and M are 13 acres and 11 acres in size, respectively. These units are situated in Sections 3 and 4 of T. 30 S., R. 3 W., and allocated as General Forest Management Area.

Access will be provided by a combination of existing roads and temporary spur roads. Two of the temporary spur roads will be newly constructed, and the third will consist of renovation of an existing natural-surface road. All the temporary roads, totaling approximately 0.32 miles, will be used and decommissioned in the same operating season in which they are constructed or renovated. Decommissioning will consist of sub-soiling the running surfaces and blocking the road beds to vehicular access. Decommissioning will be accomplished by BLM road maintenance personnel. The first 0.39 miles of Segment A of Road No. 30-3-17.0 will be renovated and blocked to vehicular traffic following the completion of thinning operations on Unit A.

Thinning will be conducted with a combination of cable yarding and ground-based harvest systems. Ground-based operations and cable yarding operations utilizing temporary roads will be restricted to the dry season which typically extends from mid-May to mid-October. Portions of units that may be yarded to all-weather roads will be available for harvest from mid-July to mid-April at the operator's discretion.

All road construction and yarding equipment will be pressure washed or steam cleaned prior to being moved into the project area. The purpose of washing the equipment is to remove any vegetative material or soil that may be contaminated with weed seeds. This is intended to minimize, if not eliminate, the risk of transporting new weed species into the project area.

Thinning within the Matrix allocations will contribute approximately 1,119 MBF, equivalent to 2,090 CCF, toward the annual allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for the Roseburg District. Density management in the Riparian Reserve will yield approximately 21 MBF, equivalent to 40 CCF, not chargeable toward the ASQ. It is anticipated that some additional volume will be modified into the sale as a result of the cutting of tail, guyline, and corridor trees within the contract area.

Surveys were conducted for those Special Status and Survey and Manage botanical species identified in the South Umpqua Connectivity Density Management EA (p. 17) and South River Commercial Thinning 2000 EA (pp. 16-17). Surveys identified 15 occurrences of *Buxbaumia viridis* in Unit A, and two in Unit L. This species was removed from the Survey and Manage Species list following completion of the 2001 Species Review, and protection of the sites is not required. Surveys documented no other Special Status or Survey and Manage botanical species.

Surveys were conducted for red tree voles, identifying 13 active and 9 inactive nests in Unit A, 4 active and 11 inactive nests in Unit L, and 3 active and 6 inactive nests in Unit M. Following procedure and direction set forth in the Standards and Guidelines (p. 10) of the *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* and BLM Information Bulletin No. OR-2001-273, *Survey and Manage Species - Identification of Non-high Priority Sites*, the South River Field Office determined these to be “non-high priority sites” not requiring protection and management for red tree voles. Concurrence with this determination was received from the Tiller Ranger District of the Umpqua National Forest and the Roseburg Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Rationale for the Decision:

The Roseburg District *Record of Decision/Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP 1995) discusses the need to manage Connectivity/Diversity Blocks for structure that contains a diversity of tree species of varying ages and sizes, and assorted canopy configurations (p. 152). It also identifies the need for management of suitable commercial forest land in the General Forest Management Area to assure a high level of sustained timber productivity while maintaining stand health and vigor (p. 151). Alternative 1 of the South Umpqua Connectivity Density Management EA would meet Connectivity/Diversity Block management objectives, relative to Unit A located in a Connectivity/Diversity Block, whereas Alternative 2 would not. Alternative 2 of the South River Commercial Thinning 2000 EA would meet General Forest Management Area objectives, relative to Units L and M, whereas Alternative 1 would not.

Comments on the South Umpqua Connectivity Density Management EA were received from one organization. Comments on the South River Commercial Thinning 2000 EA were received from three organizations. None of the comments identified issues or concerns which were not already considered and addressed in the respective EAs, or which constituted new information that would alter the conclusions of the analyses.

The BLM made a determination that these thinnings were “not likely to adversely affect” the northern spotted owl because, while the action would modify existing habitat conditions within the project stands, the stands do not contain any suitable nesting, roosting and foraging habitat. Levels of suitable habitat provided by BLM-managed lands within the provincial owl territories overlapping the project areas would remain at present levels. In the longer term, treatment of the stands will lead to the development of suitable habitat, including nesting habitat in the case of Unit A. The BLM conferred with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on these projects and a letter of concurrence was received on May 31, 2001. The letter (File Name: 1-15-01-1-270) was in response to a BLM request for written concurrence on effects determination for FY 2001-2002 Programmatic Assessments for Activities Not Likely to Adversely Affect Listed Species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred that the action was not likely to adversely affect the northern spotted owl because, while thinning would degrade dispersal habitat in the short term, the habitat is expected to function as intended and improve over time.

Relative to the thinning of Unit A, the BLM made a determination that the action was “not likely to adversely affect” the Oregon Coast coho salmon, Oregon Coast steelhead trout, and Essential Fish Habitat as designated by the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The basis for this determination was that density management within Riparian Reserves would be limited to intermittent streams which are a mile or more distant from Essential Fish Habitat and streams inhabited by coho salmon. As a consequence, the likelihood of sediment transport resulting in habitat degradation was considered negligible. In a letter dated February 12, 2002, the National Marine Fisheries Service concurred with these findings.

With regard to the thinning of Units L and M, the BLM made a determination of “no affect” on the Oregon Coast coho salmon, Oregon Coast steelhead trout, and Essential Fish Habitat. This determination was based upon the following:

- There is no identifiable degradation to aquatic habitat or environmental conditions. Present habitat elements and access would be maintained at the subwatershed and watershed levels, and improved at the site level in the long term.
- There are no Riparian Reserves in either Unit L or M. Within their respective drainages, Unit L is approximately 1 mile above anadromous stream reaches, and Unit M approximately 4.5 miles above anadromous stream reaches.

Compliance and Monitoring:

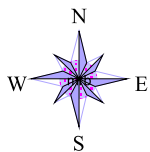
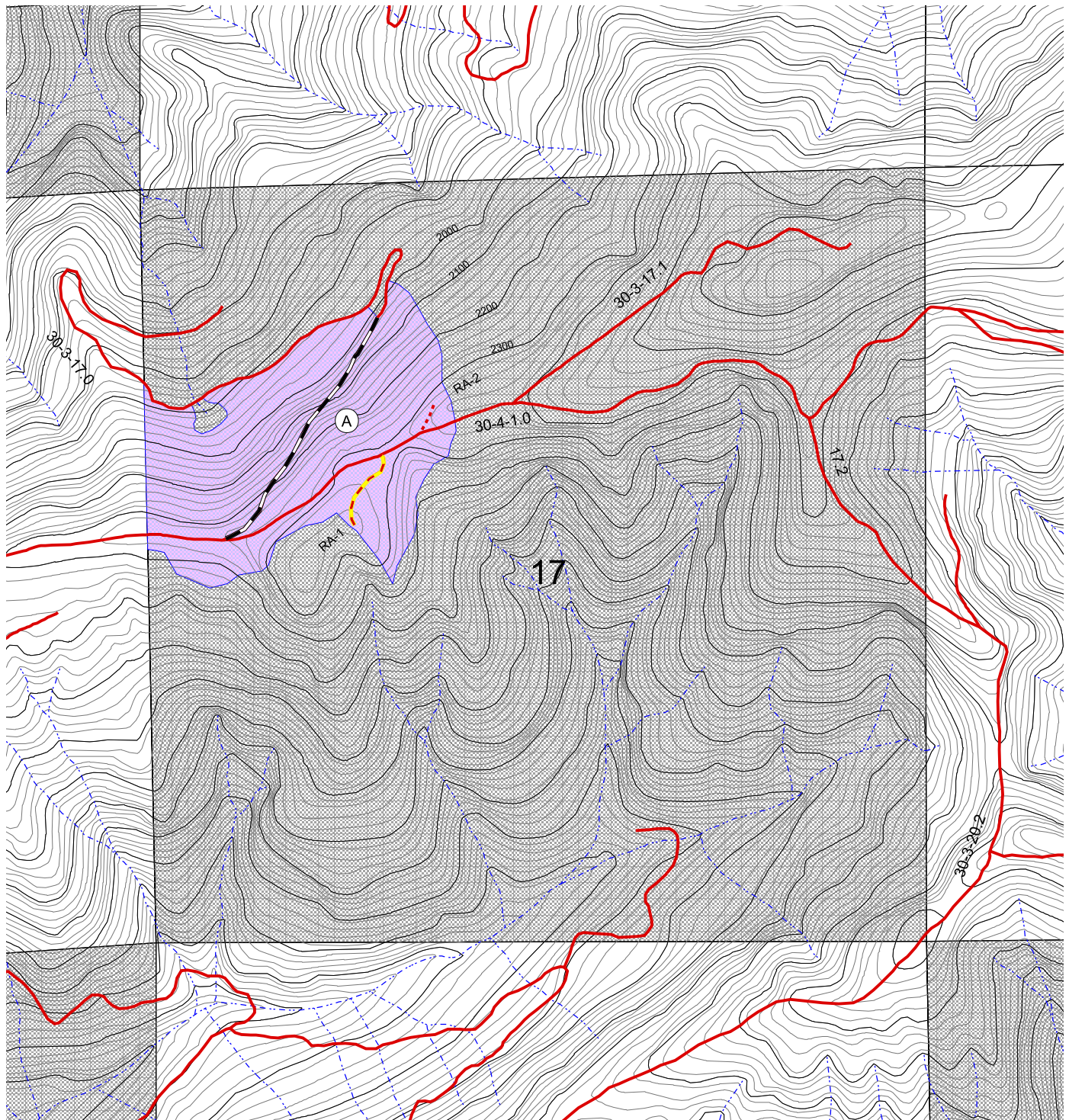
Monitoring will be done in accordance with the ROD/RMP, Appendix I (pp. 84, 190, 193, and 195-199). Effectiveness and validation monitoring will be conducted with regards to: Riparian Reserves, Matrix, Water and Soils, Wildlife Habitat, and Special Status and Special Attention Species Habitat.

Protest and Appeals Procedures: As outlined in 43 CFR § 5003 - Administrative Remedies under § 5003.3 (a) and (b), protests may be made within 15 days of the August 27, 2002, publication date of the first notice of sale in the Roseburg, Oregon *News Review*. Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision.

E. Dwight Fielder
Field Manager
South River Field Office

Date

BLAND DAYS COMMERCIAL THINNING



T30S R3W

Willamette Meridian, Roseburg, OR.

1000 0 1000 Feet

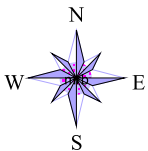
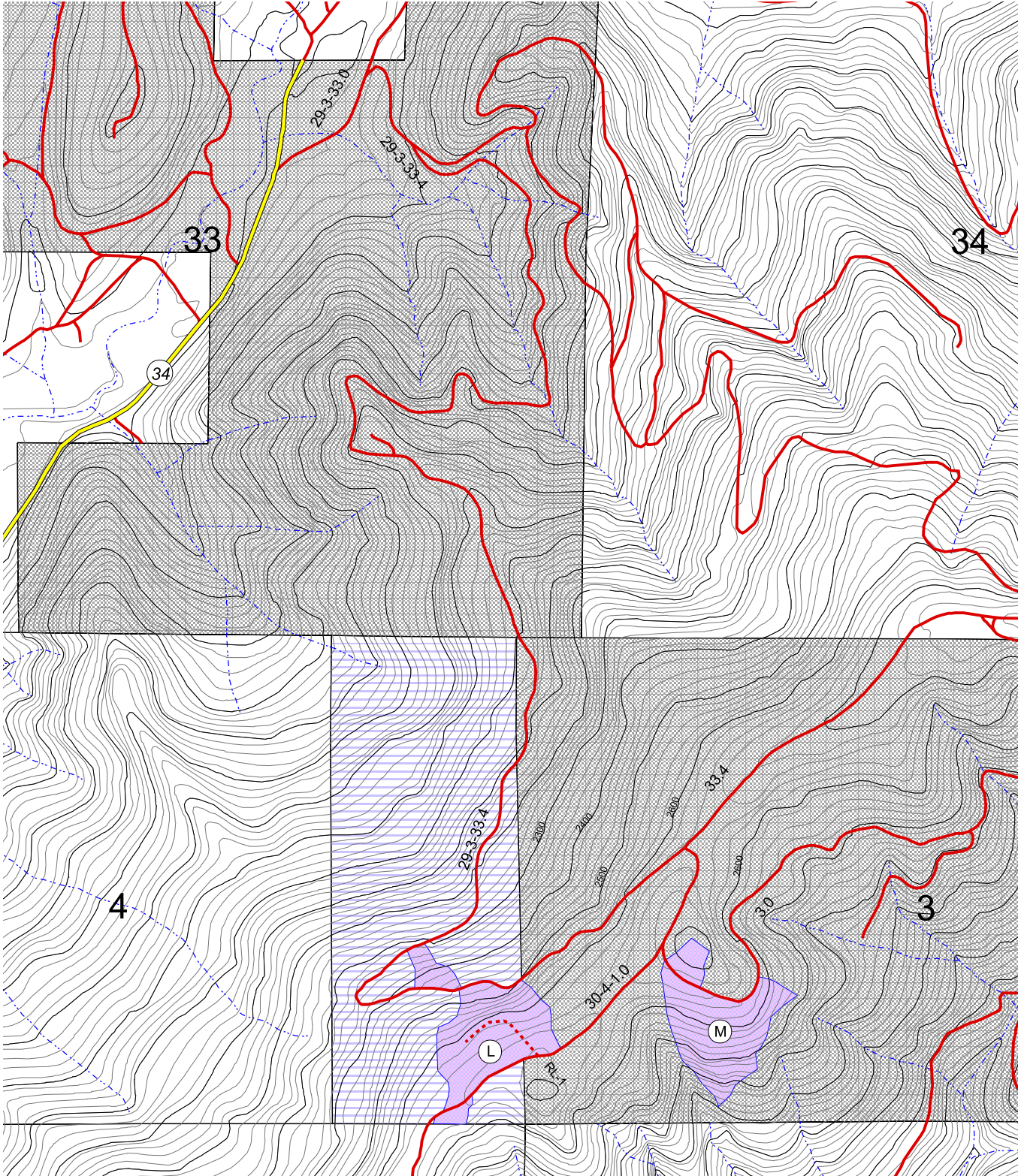
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- Existing Road
- Renovate, Permanent/Rock
- Renovate, Decommission
- Construct, Decommission
- Stream
- 100' Contour
- 20' Contour

- Thinning Area
- BLM (O&C) Land
- Private Land

BLAND DAYS COMMERCIAL THINNING



1000 0 1000 Feet

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- Paved Highway
- Existing Road
- Construct, Decommission
- Stream
- 100' Contour
- 20' Contour

- Thinning Area
- BLM (O&C) Land
- BLM (PD) Land
- Private Land

T30S R3W

Willamette Meridian, Roseburg, OR.